

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (Currently Amended) A computer implemented method of handling stored ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ objects that have been created by signing information objects by respective transfer agents, submitting signed information objects to a trusted ~~custodial utility~~ (TCU) third-party repository of information objects, validating the submitted signed information objects by at least testing the integrity of the contents of each signed information object and the validity of the signature of the respective transfer agent, and applying to each validated information object a current date-time stamp and a digital signature and authentication certificate of the TCU third-party repository of information objects, which handles at least one ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ object based on rules established by an owner of the at least one ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ object, comprising the steps of:

establishing at least one type of ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ object;

establishing at least one type of ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ object as potential transferable records;

enabling at least one selected user to access at least one selected type of ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ object;

identifying at least one type of ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ object required to conclude a deal; and

controlling transformation of a selected ~~electronic~~<sup>original</sup> authoritative copy object into a transferable record.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein based on rules established by an owner of an ~~electronic~~<sup>original</sup> authoritative copy object requiring execution as part of concluding the deal, the TCU trusted third-party repository of information objects notifies at least one participant in the deal when the ~~electronic~~<sup>original</sup> authoritative copy object is received by the TCU trusted third-party repository of information objects.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of creating an object-inventory from at least one stored ~~electronic~~<sup>original</sup> authoritative copy object that is a transferable record and is required to conclude the deal, wherein the object-inventory includes a date-time stamp and a digital signature and authentication certificate of the TCU trusted third-party repository of information objects, and the object-inventory comprises a wrapper that includes object identifiers that respectively point to the transferable record and at least one signature block of at least one participant in the deal, the at least one participant's signature block comprising a hash of a combination of a master copy of the transferable record and the at least one participant's digitized signature.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the object-inventory further includes metadata summarizing the deal.

5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

receiving, by the TCU trusted third-party repository of information objects, a request from a user to retrieve content of an ~~electronic~~ original authoritative copy object; and

checking owner-established rules associated with the type of the ~~electronic~~ original authoritative copy object identified in the request to determine whether the user has been enabled to access the type of ~~electronic~~ original authoritative copy object identified in the request.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, wherein the request indicates that the content is to be retrieved to add at least one signatures, and if the user has been enabled to access the type of the ~~electronic~~ original authoritative copy object identified in the request, the TCU trusted third-party repository of information objects carries out the steps of:

stripping all signatures from the ~~electronic~~ original authoritative copy object identified in the request, thereby leaving only the content of the ~~electronic~~ original authoritative copy object;

forming a wrapper that includes the content of the ~~electronic~~ original authoritative copy object identified in the request, a current date-time indication, and the TCU's trusted third-party repository of information objects' digital signature and authentication certificate, and

communicating the wrapper to the user.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, wherein the user receives the wrapper and extracts the content for rendering by the user.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein the user prints the content.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 7, wherein the user queries the TCU trusted third-party repository of information objects for parties who may have signed the ~~electronic~~ original authoritative copy object corresponding to the content rendered by the user, and in response to the query, the TCU trusted third-party repository of information objects unwraps the ~~electronic~~ original authoritative copy object, extracts any signer information included in the ~~electronic~~ original authoritative copy object, forms a data structure comprising the signer information, and communicates the data structure to the user.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 7, wherein after rendering the content, a user forms a respective signature block from the content and the user's digital signature, commits to be bound by its digital signature, and submits the signature block to the TCU trusted third-party repository of information objects.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the user's signature block comprises signer information that includes at least a hash of the content and the user's digital signature and certificate information.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the signer information includes at least one authenticated attribute.

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10, wherein a plurality of users submit respective signature blocks in parallel to the ~~TCU trusted third-party repository of information objects~~.

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, wherein the signature blocks are stored by the ~~TCU trusted third-party repository of information objects~~ as recursively applied wrappers.

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10, wherein the ~~TCU trusted third-party repository of information objects~~ extracts information from the signature block submitted by the user and, based on the extracted information, verifies an identity of the user and an integrity of the content used to form the signature block.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 15, wherein the ~~TCU trusted third-party repository of information objects~~ verifies the integrity of content by computing a hash of the content and comparing the computed hash to a hash included in a signer information portion of the signature block.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10, wherein the content is submitted to the ~~TCU trusted third-party repository of information objects~~, and the ~~TCU trusted third-party repository of information objects~~ retrieves the corresponding

~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ object, unwraps the ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ object to retrieve the content of the ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ object, and forms a wrapper that includes the retrieved content, the submitted signature block, a current date-time indication and the TCU's ~~trusted third-party repository of information objects~~' digital signature and authentication certificate, whereby the wrapper comprises a new ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ object.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 17, wherein the user's signature block includes an unauthenticated attribute field, and the TCU ~~trusted third-party repository of information objects~~ adds the current date-time indication to the unauthenticated attribute field to indicate a time of receipt by the TCU ~~trusted third-party repository of information objects~~ of the user's signature block.

19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 17, wherein a plurality of users submit respective signature blocks to the TCU ~~trusted third-party repository of information objects~~, and the submitted signature blocks are placed in at least one of a plurality of recursively applied wrappers.

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 17, wherein the TCU ~~trusted third-party repository of information objects~~ notifies the owner of the ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ object corresponding to the content, based on a rule established by the owner, that the signature block has been included in the wrapper.

21. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 20, wherein the new ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ object is a transferable record based on the established rules.

22. (Currently Amended) A computer implemented method of handling stored ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ objects that have been created by signing information objects by respective transfer agents, submitting signed information objects to a ~~trusted custodial utility (TCU)~~ trusted third-party repository of information objects, validating the submitted signed information objects by at least testing the integrity of the contents of each signed information object and the validity of the signature of the respective transfer agent, and applying to each validated information object a current date-time stamp and a digital signature and authentication certificate of the ~~TCU~~ trusted third-party repository of information objects, comprising the following steps by the ~~TCU~~ trusted third-party repository of information objects:

receiving a request submitted by a user for retrieval of an ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ object identified in the request;

determining whether the user has authority to submit the request; and

if the user is determined to have authority, carrying out the steps of:

retrieving the ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ object identified in the request;

extracting from the retrieved ~~electronic original authoritative copy~~ object content information and at least one signature block;

extracting from the signature block signer information;

extracting at least one of a current date-time of a digitized signature included in the signer information and a current date-time of the TCU's trusted third-party repository of information objects' receipt of the signature block;

extracting from the signature block certificate information that includes signer identifying information;

forming a data structure from the extracted information such that upon rendering the content the information is properly placed with respect to the content and includes at least one forgery-resistant indicium that clearly identifies the rendered information as a copy; and

communicating the data structure to the user.

23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 22, wherein the data structure is included in a wrapper that also includes a current date-time indication and the TCU's trusted third-party repository of information objects' digital signature and authentication certificate.

24. (Original) The method of claim 22, wherein the data structure includes tags that guide placement of the information.

25. (Currently Amended) A computer implemented method of handling stored electronic original authoritative copy objects that have been created by signing information objects by respective transfer agents, submitting signed information objects to a trusted custodial utility (TCU) trusted third-party repository of information objects, validating the submitted signed information objects by at least

testing the integrity of the contents of each signed information object and the validity of the signature of the respective transfer agent, and applying to each validated information object a current date-time stamp and a digital signature and authentication certificate of the TCU trusted third-party repository of information objects, which handles at least one ~~electronic original~~ authoritative copy object based on rules established by an owner of the at least one ~~electronic original~~ authoritative copy object, comprising the steps of:

- authenticating an identity of the owner;
- establishing at least one type of ~~electronic original~~ authoritative copy object, establishing at least one type of ~~electronic original~~ authoritative copy object as potential transferable records, enabling at least one selected user to access at least one selected type of ~~electronic original~~ authoritative copy object, identifying at least one type of ~~electronic original~~ authoritative copy object required to conclude a deal, controlling transformation of a selected ~~electronic original~~ authoritative copy object into a transferable record, identifying at least one user able to authorize transfer of an interest in a transferable record; and
- validating the owner's right to act with respect to the deal.